MIKE MOUNTAIN HORSE

INDIAN CUSTOMS

In the spring of 1910 I was called to the bedside of my dying uncle, Chief Bull Shield, of the Blood Reserve. My uncle's capacious tepee was erected on a large flat in his allotment on our Reserve. I noticed as I approached the tepee that my relatives had already congregated there with a number of other Indians, friends of the Bull Shield family. The weird chanting of a medicine man, accompanied by the steady beating of tom toms, could be distinctly heard from within the tepee as I approached with Arthur Bull Shields, one of my cousins. With utmost reverence we entered and seated ourselves on a robe near the entrance. As I gazed around the interior, I noticed that the last tribal rites of our people had already been performed by our immediate relatives.

My uncle lay in a state of coma on a bed of expensive colored shawls, breathing hard and coughing at long intervals. Dressed in a beautiful buckskin suit with ermine tails for fringes, his feet encased in snow-white beaded moccasins, he was all ready for that long journey to the Big Sands -- the Indian Hereafter. My father, Mountain Horse, sat near his pillow brushing the flies away from his brother's face, using hawk's wings as a fan. My aunt, Pipe Woman, sat near his feet shedding silent tears. Powdered red paint, I noticed, was sprinkled on the ground in the interior, half-way around, while blue powder completed the circle. Over this powdered paint, red and blue plumes were scattered. All these were insignia of the office held by my uncle in our tribe as an affluent and promient chieftain. He was recorded as having the largest horse herd on our

reserve, their number running into thousands. He had had a colorful career, and the heroic achievements credited to him are worthy of an epic poem.

Surrounded by his sorrowing family and relatives, and amidst loud and hysterical weeping from those in attendance, this great Chieftain passed to the "Great Beyond".

It is customary for an Indian to be dressed for interment before his demise. He is prepared for burial in his best clothes which, if he is an affluent person, usually consist of a buckskin suit. His hair is combed and plaited nicely, and his face is painted when those in attendance conclude that the end is near. Some people might say: "They must want to get rid of their dead pretty quick." But such is not the case. This ancient custom of dressing up a person on the point of death is derived from the following old superstitious belief:

Upon a person's death his spirit, or "shadow" as the Indians call it, immediately takes flight from the earthly body and journeys to the Big Sands in such clothing as is worn on the death bed. To dress an Indian for burial after death is considered to be of no benefit to him in the hereafter, since his shadow has already arrived in the spirit world. Thus, if he were clad in a nightgown when dying, his spirit would arrive at its destination thus attired and he would spend eternity thus. Hence my uncle's very elaborate surroundings and magnificent attire before his death.

The mourning period observed by those bereaved lasts for a year. The women mourners sacrifice their beautiful long hair and wear their skirts shorter. At intervals a visit is made to the burial place of the deceased, where the bereaved weep and lament loudly, calling

the departed by name. In the case of women, I recall noticing, when a small boy, one woman in particular coming from the graveside of her offspring. That portion of her legs below the knees showed a number of long scratches crossways, and her limbs were marked like pieces of birch. I wondered in my childish mind how she happened to be scratched that way. I was destined to find out later. Soon after, my step-mother asked me to accompany her to the grave of my baby brother. On arrival there she took out a piece of glass and deliberately started to tear her skin crossways below both her knees, at the same time wailing in a loud voice for her baby,. Blood flowed from these self-inflicted wounds. I tried my utmost to prevent her from following this repelling custom, but she was adamant. Being almost a baby myself then, I could not do much, only stare and stand at a considerable distance. It was considered ethical for our women to scratch their lower limbs in this manner, at intervals, during the period of mourning.

The most horrible and sordid custom was the chopping off of the tip of one little finger on the death of an especially dear one. This primitive way of showing grief, I heard, was carried out by my father and other members of the immediate family, on the death of my uncle. I did not witness the actual severing of the digits, but I saw my father's hand bandaged in a large bundle a week later, and surmised that the report was true. This custom, however, was only carried out on rare occasions, and has now been discontinued.

A minor sacrifice bereaved persons underwent was the discarding of all personal property to other Indians. I have seen Indian women walk into a bereaved person's lodge and deliberately cart away everything they could lay their hands on -- pots, pans, bedding, and any food available.

After others have thus helped themselves, the bereaved person is supposed to discard the remainder of his or her possessions by throwing them into the river. Ethics demand that the mourner be destitute and in rags during the period of mourning.

Numerous froms of interment were followed by the aborigine. In the case of a rich, influential chieftain, his tepee would be erected and furnished as for immediate occupation. Beds were made around the walls complete and a fire-place installed in the centre. Food bags were filled with eatables and placed within. On a bed facing the entrance, covered with numerous robes, was laid the corpse. After this, the exit was sewn together and the lodge abandoned.

Another form of interment was to deposit the corpse on the branches of trees. A cadaver was wrapped in a huge bundle and left securely tied to the branches of a tree selected for this prupose.

Soon after the establishment of my people on reserves, they adopted a more modern form of burial by placing their dead in wooden coffins and depositing them in small shanties. One could look into these huts and see coffin upon coffin piled high within. Today the Indian has taken another step forward in regard to his dead. Modern cemeteries may be observed on all reserves and the last rites of the dead are administered by the clergy.

See Sun Dance.

The gruesome practice of taking the scalp from a vanquished foe was done mainly for the purpose of proving the prowess of the victor. An incision was made around the top of the head and the skin pulled off with a quick jerk. The scalp was then kept as a souvenir, and

at war dances was attached to a long stick and held high in the air by the owner while dancing.

Another custom which played a prominent part in the life of a warrior on the eve of battle was to cut away a small portion of his body as an offering for food to any of the numerous puny spirits then worshipped by our people. I witnessed a revival of this revolting custom during the great war in Europe. One evening, during those dark days of 1917, when the Germans were having things pretty much their own way, I was walking along a beautiful French road with a number of other Indian lads. We stopped at a small clearing and sat down, and after a few moments several of the boys began to pray. Some made supplication for the success of the allied arms, while others prayed for a happy return to their father and mothers, or to their own families. George Strangling Wolf, while praying, took a needle out of his "housewife" (a soldier's name for a sewing kit) and inserted it into the skin near his knee. He then took an army knife and before I could restrain him had sliced off that portion of the flesh which he was holding out taut with the needle. Pointing in the direction of the sun, and still holding the small portion of bloody flesh in his hand, George offered the following prayer:

> "Help me. Sun, to survive this terrible war,
> that I may meet my relatives again. With this
> request, I offer you my body as food."

He then dug a small hole in the ground with his finger and buried the bloody thing he was holding. Strangling Wolf is still a strong adherent to the ancient beliefs of his forefathers.

I will now relate the terrible punishment imposed on a married woman who had violated the sanctity of her home by committing adultery. My aunt, a woman in her 80th year when she passed away, once related to me an incident that she had witnessed when a girl of a married woman caught in illicit ecstasy with a young man. Her husband took her to their tepee and ordered her to dress up in her best attire for burial. In the interim he sat down and immediately started to sharpen his huge hunting knife. After his wife had combed her hair and painted her face, he led her to the centre of the huge encampment, and there, in front of everyone, deliberately hacked her to death. While she lay prostrate on the ground the assassin started to walk away but, looking back at his ghastly work, he observed his wife writhing and kicking on the ground in her death agony. He then fled from this gruesome sight, crying out for her in a loud voice as he ran.

On another occasion a married woman was caught indulging in an amorous embrace with her paramour. Her husband immediately ordered her to go home where he proceeded to cut the cords of both her legs above the heels. Next he severed both of her ears. Not satisfied with this mutilation, the man cut the tip of her nose off. Last of all, he cut her hair close to her head and told her to go back to her sweetheart. This woman had been a great beauty. After she was thus disfigured and unable to look any one in the face any more, in her loneliness and despair she repaired to a bush and hanged herself.

The primitive Indian had his own code of ethics and he lived up to that code. One of his customs was to purchase his wife from her parents. Such a marriage was as binding as that of any white man. After the payment was made for the young lady the parents had no more

control over her.

Last of all I would like to relate another ancient, cruel and barbarous custom of the aborigine. Before they became entangled with modern methods of civilization, the Indians lived to a good old age, usually past the century mark. They were also a distinctly nomadic people. Moving as they did from place to place, sometimes at a moment's notice, they could make little or no provision for their aged people beyond the attentions granted them by immediate relatives. The only recourse, therefore, on occasion, was to abandon these aged centenarians to their fate. In the majority of cases these old people were so feeble that they were incapable of walking any distance and their great age had dimmed their eyesight. When it was decided to abandon an aged person, a canopy was erected wherein she sat and gradually died of starvation, to provide food for rodents and other prowling denizens of the plains.

Spear Chief, a member of the Blood Indian tribe, and quite an old man when he told the story, related to me the following incident of his grandmother's childhood.

When a large encampment of Indians were moving to a new location, she and some other children noticed an old woman who had been forsaken by her family, sitting solitary under a canopy. Being curious like all children, these little girls ran over and gathered around the poor emaciated crone. The centenarian looked up at them from her squatting position and uttered a prophecy to the children around her, which prediction has been handed down from generation to generation. "My children," she said, "two generations from now your great grandchildren will be living on top of wood and all their commodities

will be of iron. Every one of them will try and be a great chief and they will leave no camp mark when they move their camps."

We are now living in that period of time she foretold, and this is the interpretation of her prediction. My people have wooden floors in their homes and iron is used extensively. An Indian loves self-aggrandisement and to be a person of some importance. When we move our tents we leave nothing but a conglomeration of paper and card-board boxes, which the wind blows away, whereas the primitive Indian marked the camp site he was vacating. So the prediction of the old abandoned woman has come true.

INDIAN LEGENDS -- The Dipper

The "Seven" is an Indian name for the Dipper.

There was once a certain warrior who was very fond of hunting. Occasionally, on his return home from these expeditions, he noticed traces of clay or dirt on his wife's face. This aroused his suspicion that she was meeting someone during his absences. "I will obtain tangible proof," he thought.

The next day, after his hunting trip, he returned without disclosing himself to his wife and observed her engaged in the task of tanning a hide. After a short while she laid it aside and going into her tepee, came out again with a flint axe and a rawhide rope. Her husband followed her into the nearby brush. Reaching her objective, an old hollow tree stump, higher than a man, she struck the stump, whereupon a serpent crawled out from the top and transformed itself into a handsome young man. The couple then began to wrestle and roll in the dirt; hence the traces of dirt on the woman's face which the husband had noticed on prior occasions.

The warrior waited until his wife had departed for home, when he also returned, only to pick up an earthen bowl and depart again. Arriving once more at the old stump he proceeded to tap on it with his knife, whereupon the reptile emerged from the top. With one tremendous blow the warrior cut its head off with his knife, and holding the bowl close to the headless body, let the blood drip into it until it was filled, when he returned to his lodge.

"Will you make some soup out of this buffalo blood?" he asked his wife. The woman complied and when the soup was ready she filled a

bowl and offered it to her man. "Put it aside and let it cool," he said. "And you had better have some yourself." After his spouse had finished her portion he said to her: "You have drunk your sweetheart's blood."

Wailing loudly for her lover, she repaired to the stump, only to see the headless body of the serpent hanging from the top, the blood still dripping therefrom. She returned to her tepee and yelled to her husband as she approached: "You will die, too!" But he was waiting for her and chopped off her head with his axe before she could enter. The headless trunk he laid on one of the skins she had been tanning and went back to the main camp. "I am now bereaved," he told the Headman. "My wife died of sickness while I was out hunting with her."

Her brothers, suspicious of her death, went out and located her dead body. They decided to remain with the body for an indefinite period. On their numerous hunting trips they usually left their youngest brother in charge of the camp. When they returned they frequently found that some stranger had been there and cooked their meals. One day while these brothers were in the tepee talking some one outside spoke to them in a wailing voice. "Don't look out. I am your dead sister. My husband is responsible for my death. The knife he used you will see lying on the ground when you come out."

On another day the brothers again went hunting and as usual left the same boy to watch their camp. On this occasion the sister appeared in person to the boy. "I am appearing to you, my brother," she said, "because of the great affection I have always had for you."

The boy told the others of this incident and declared that he was afraid to be alone with the spirit of his sister.

"Hide yourself under the robe, and when she comes again, try to discover the source of her supernatural powers," they instructed him.

The boy did as he was advised and the sister again appeared at the camp. She was observed to pull out a buffalo robe, the border of which was partially ornamented with human scalps. The boy heard her say: "My six brothers' scalps will complete the border ornaments; my baby brother's scalp will complete the centre decoration."

This the boy also recounted to his brothers. After further consultation the lad was advised to hide once more and steal her bag containing the ornamental robe and other belongings. The boy did as he was told and managed to steal the following articles from her bag; a porcupine tail used by medicine men for doctoring; face paint; quills for decorative purposes; and buffalo sinews used for sewing. With these possessions the boys fled from the camp in fear of their sister's spirit.

On discovering her losses the sister immediately started in pursuit. After travelling some distance, one of the runaways looked behind and saw her approaching. "Look, there she is!" he cried to the others. She was gaining on them rapidly. "Throw away those porcupine quills, so she will lose time in picking them up," one of them suggested. The quills were thrown out and scattered to the wind. The more distance was covered. "There she is again," another cried as he observed her again appearing over the horizon. "Throw away the paint." This was done and the sister stopped to gather her paint

off the ground. It enabled the boys to gain on her. "She's coming again," one of them panted as he observed her figure at a distance. "Scatter her thread." This was done, and after a while the porcupine tail was also discarded.

About this time the lads had reached a tree which they proceeded to climb, the oldest one at the bottom, the youngest at the top. Here their sister came upon them. "I am going to kill every one of you," she cried. She then climbed up and knocked down one after the other, until she reached the sixth brother. A bird then flew by and screeched out to the one occupying the highest perch, "Shoot that feather in her hair or else she will kill you, too." The lad took careful aim and letting fly an arrow, hit the feather, splitting it in twain. Whereupon the woman fell from the tree dead.

The lone survivor then descended from his perch and laid his brothers side by side on the ground. Taking his bow and arrows he shot upwards, calling out loudly as he did so, "Look out, my brothers! An arrow is coming down. It may hurt you. Jump up!" He repeated this performance four times. On the fourth, his brothers responded by jumping to their feet.

A consultation was then held as to their next procedure. Some advised returning to the camp, but the youngest said, "No. Our sister is supernatural. She may rise again and kill us. Let us ascend to the heavens and form a part of the stars." This was agreed to. They stood in the form of a dipper. "Now shut your eyes and don't open them until I give the word," the boy told them. They followed his instructions. Upon the word being given, they opened their eyes and found themselves in the heavens, still standing in the form of a dipper.

the

INDIAN LEGENDS -- The Moon

Long ago, a married woman, more or less perverted, had a lover. She was extremely enamoured of her paramour and on frequent occasions indulged in clandestine trysts with him. Unable to meet him secretly any more, because her husband's suspicions were aroused, she feigned illness for a period of four days which terminated in her supposed death. Her people laid her on a hillock, using a buffalo robe to cover her, and placing a pillow at her head. Large boulders placed on either side ~~severed~~ served to hold the robe down. This form of burial had been her special request during the last days of her illness. "My relatives," she said, "when I die, do not bury me. Leave all my personal belongings beside me." The faker was left in this position by her mourning relatives. Later, her sorrowing husband returned for a last farewell. On arriving at the spot he found it vacant, because in the interim her paramour had visited her and both had taken flight. A few days later her lover was seen at his camp accompanied by a young man whom nobody knew. In reality it was the woman disguised as a warrior. The child of the supposed dead woman, whose suspicions were also aroused because of the intense interest bestowed upon him by this strange young man, informed his father of his suspicions. "Father," he said, "I believe that man is my mother. Invariably he asks me to his side and fondles me. I recognize his voice as my mother's."

After thinking the matter over very carefully, the husband next day requested his aged mother to prepare a special soup. "I want to invite those two boys for supper," he told her. This soup was

a great favorite with the wronged warrior's wife, and was made the following way:

In tanning a buffalo skin, when the hide is bone dry it is scraped with an elk horn shaped like a capital "L". The long part is used as a handle, while the end of the short side is sharpened and used for scraping purposes. All shavings from these hides so scraped are boiled in an earthen pot and used as soup.

The two friends accepted the invitation. When his guests had seated themselves, the warrior recognized his wife. On being asked to partake of the soup, one of the boys refused, but the imposter accepted. Whereupon, the host jumped up and pointing an accusing finger at her denounced her for what she had done. "You shall die for your sins," he declared. "I have discovered your deception. You cannot disappear into the earth or climb to the sky for safety."

Her lover managed to escape but the woman was slower, and her husband had gained the entrance before she could do so. He pulled out his flint knife and she began to run to and fro before him. Realizing that her chances for escape were desperate and that she could not save herself, she used supernatural powers which enabled her to float upward into space. As she was disappearing her husband struck at her, severing one limb at the knee. The unfaithful one continued to float upward and at last planted herself on the moon. Today if you look at the moon when it is full you will observe the figure of a person with one leg, standing beside a fireplace.

INDIAN LEGENDS -- Medicine Rock, Lethbridge

In primitive days when countless herds of buffalo roamed the prairies, the Blood tribe once made their winter quarters along the St. Mary River bottom, in the vicinity of the present city of Lethbridge.

One day an Indian in quest of the bearded monarch of the plains stood on top of the knoll above what is now known as Ashcroft Mine. Looking across the river he observed some one walking toward it from one of the neighboring knolls south of what is now known as Brewery Road. Wondering who it could be, he turned north and coming within the vicinity of the present C.P.R. high level bridge, descended to the river. On his way across he looked again and saw the same person standing on the edge of the knoll, apparently in quest of something. On closer observation he could see that he was what was called a Medicine Pipe man. A Medicine Pipe man always dyes the blanket or robe which he wears a dark red; he also wears a tuft of hair in a little knot, about three or four inches long, on top of his forehead, and his face and hair are painted the same color, an insignia of his position. This fellow was finally observed by the warrior to descend the hill and make for the river bottom. On reaching the foot of the hill, he squatted down, Indian fashion. The hunter, riding up, discovered nothing but a solid, reddish rock, resembling a man in sitting posture. He then ascended the hill and looked in all directions, but failed to find a single living person. He again descended and offered prayers in close proximity to the rocks. The following night a stranger appeared to the hunter in his dreams: "My son," he said, "I am the rock you saw. I want you and your children to come and offer me peace offerings at all times."

From that time on this rock was known as Medicine Rock and was usually laden with gifts such as wearing apparel, tobacco and food. But the custom of offering these gifts has now long ceased and the rock is usually covered with dirt and coal slack.

"IN THE BEGINNING . . . "

The following Indian legend -- our Genesis -- was known to the Indians many, many years before the advent of the white man. While making no attempt to explain its similarities to the Bible story, I maintain that it is the true Indian version and has not been changed in any way since the Bible story was introduced to the Indians.

A long time ago there was a great flood. Water was everywhere and no living thing was left except one superman called Nahpi. and a solitary muskrat. Nahpi, realizing his responsibility as the only man to survive the great disaster, said to the muskrat: "You must dive to the bottom of this water and bring up some earth." The muskrat accordingly dived but the distance to the bottom was so great that when he returned it was as a floating dead body. Upon examination, Nahpi discovered that he had reached the earth, for in his claws there was soil. Nahpi took this soil in his hands and commenced rolling it, and as he rolled the soil it multiplied and fell and blew and scattered from him until the present earth's surface was formed.

Having restored the earth, Nahpi picked up some of the soil he had generated and formed animals and birds which, after giving them breath of life, he freed to habitate the land and air.

Then after long solitude, Nahpi realized his need of a human mate. Picking up more soil, he took a rib from his side and from these

materials constructed the form of a woman, into which he breathed life. This woman became his constant companion and together they had much enjoyment in the ruling of the world.

One day, Nahpi and his woman were sitting by the river bank in deep meditation as to ways in which to improve the earth. Nahpi rose, picked up a buffalo chip from the ground, and said to his companion: "I will cast this buffalo chip into the water. If it floats, I will cause the coming generations to rise again on the fourth day following their death."

But the woman restrained him, saying: "Not so, for by this means the earth would soon become over-populated. Rather, let me take this stone and cast it into the water. If it sinks, people will die for ever, but if it floats, life will be eternal." And so, through the woman's logic and influence (superior as it has proven even to this day) death came into the world as the Indian understands it.

After a time, owing to the heavy business of governing and arranging for the future of the world, Nahpi and the woman separated, and for many moons were not together. Nahpi, in order to carry on his projects, had created many men to help him. One day when he and his band were hunting for buffalo, Nahpi became separated from the rest and went south alone as far as the Highwood River. Standing on the edge of the east bank, he observed below him in the valley a number of tepees, all of magnificent workmanship. Their chalky whiteness could be seen from afar, and the neatness and orderly fashion of the settlement greatly impressed him. He began to shout and wave to attract the attention of the owners. To his surprise

he discovered that the inhabitants were the woman whom he had created and several women companions who had been created by her. She came to meet him and explained her activities. Nahpi deeply impressed by the resplendent encampment and the obvious advantage of having an amalgamation with the women who had made it, said: "I have created many men who are without women companions. Let us align my men on the bank of the river, and from them your women can select husbands." This the woman agreed to, and the men were accordingly aligned on the bank of the river, Nahpi standing with them.

Then the chief woman retired secretly and removed her fine clothes. She unbraided and disarrayed her hair, donned dirty rags, and was the first of the women to go forth to choose a husband. Thus disguised she walked up to Nahpi and seizing his wrist announced her choice of him as a husband. Nahpi, however, seeing but an unkempt hag and having in mind his own woman as mate, would not be led away. So the woman returned to her tepee alone. Gathering the others around her, she instructed them to go up to the bank and choose their husbands, but on no account was any of them to select Nahpi. The women did as directed; all chose husbands, and Nahpi was left standing on the bank alone. The chief woman again arrayed herself in her finery, combed and rearranged her hair, painted her face, and came forward to Nahpi. Shaking her fist at him she said, "You have made me ashamed in the eyes of all other women by not coming with me when I chose you for a husband. Now you will remain standing on that spot, but not as Nahpi, for I will prepare a charm which will turn you into a pine tree." And this huge pine tree, is still

standing in solitude somewhere along the banks of the Highwood River.

So runs the tribal legend of the formation of our earth, and of the subsequent development of its life; a story, to my mind, similar in many respects to the Genesis of the white man.

SUN DANCE CENTRE POLE

The frame work of a Sun Dance lodge is divided into several sections somewhat similar to a horse corral. Each of these sections consists of two long forked posts and a couple of other poles, one a little longer than the other.

The task of chopping down and hauling these posts is placed in the hands of minor chiefs, or some other responsible persons. After these saplings are cut and hauled, a couple of post holes are dug in the place selected and the straight ends of the forked posts are placed therein and tampered down. This accomplished, the shorter pole is placed crosswise on top of the two forked posts, which tends to hold them securely in place. The longer pole is then propped up on the cross pole. This is only one section completed. Others are done in a similar manner, and after completion of the whole, the finished framework resembles a high horse corral.

Then follows the ceremony of selection the centre pole. At this ceremony the great secret Horn Society, Senior Lodge of the Blackfoot Confederacy, officiates. The task of selecting a tree for this purpose is placed in charge of two able warriors who proceed on horseback to the nearby thickets, and after making their selection, and placing a mark thereon, they report back to the main body.

The Horn Society, dressed in their best beaded regalia, and accompanied by their women members, then proceed to the designated spot. At approximately 200 yards from their destination, a halt is called. Four renowned and able warriors are then chosen from

those present to go forward to make a final official discovery of the tree already selected, advancing, single file, into the wood. These men then imitate a kid fox's howl, to indicate that they have discovered the marked tree. On hearing this, everybody, including the women members, begin to sing to the beating of drums. The four men who made the final selection now appear running to and fro in single file as they emerge from the wood. As they run they circle once, to signify that they have located their objective. Coming to a halt about 25 yards from the main body, each man alternately kicks and scatters with his feet a conglomeration of sticks and buffalo chips heaped in front of the members standing in a row. At this point another warrior from the ranks asks them for news. But before they utter a word to him, he must relate in a loud voice any heroic achievement credited to him in his youth. After this, he turns to the four for instructions concerning details of the tree's location, and on being informed acquaints the others with this information. The four men then relate their individual war achievements, how they led war parties in former days, and how they are now going to lead the Horn Society to their destination. After these ceremonies every one approaches the tree on foot, and on arriving at their destination, all sit down. A fire is then kindled by a member chosen especially for this task. He alone is authorized to kindle fires, light pipes used for smoking, and turn incense. No matches are used for lighting the pipes.

At this point, a member will fill his pipe and offer it to one of the wise old men in attendance, requesting him to pray that he may have good luck in his various undertakings and bring up his

children properly. The patriarch then takes the pipe and holding the stone bowl in his right hand, and pointing upward with the stem, prays for every member present, and for the whole tribe in general.

At the conclusion of this prayer every one responds by saying "Hey", which signifies "Amen". Then the patricarch returns the pipe to the man who offered it to him, who lights it from the fire and offers it to each member separately. Each member takes four puffs at it, at the same time stroking the donor's body twice on either side. After this, four sweet-grass incenses are lighted at the base of the chosen tree, each burning at one of the four points of the compass. During the lighting of this incense every one present prays that the tree may fall in an easterly direction; if not, that it may strike the ground pointing west, and that all branches may remain intact as the tree falls. If any limbs of the tree break off while falling, it will denote ill luck for some member of the Society officiating at the ceremony. Should the tree fall in a northerly or southerly direction, a death in the family of someone officiating is indicated.

After the first four incenses lighted have died out, another four are lighted. The Senior Horn member then picks up two axes for use in falling this tree. These he consecrates by holding each one separately over the fumes of an incense. He then selects two able-bodied members from those present, instructing each to kneel beside an incanse, those on the north and south sides being indicated. While these two members are kneeling, the sage orders them to pray for protection from harm while chopping down the

the tree, and to include in their request a long and happy life with their families. The assembly remains silent during the progress of these supplications, which when completed, the warrior picks up one of the axes and holding it for a moment over the fumes of the incense, hands it to one of the kneeling men. He does the same thing with the other axe, handing it to the other kneeling man. Now, kneeling himself, his right hand on the base of the tree, he prays as follows:

> "Dweller of the Heavens, who have us Indians the ceremony of Sun Dance, I pray you to help us at this time and use your divine power in guarding this tree so as not to break any of its branches when it strikes the ground."

After this short invocation, he arises and requests the lighter to ignite all four incenses. He then instructs his companions with the axes to arise, which they do. Approacing first the one standing due south, he grasps his arms below the elbows and makes four imitation moves as if chopping down a tree. At each alternative move, the ace is held over the sacred fumes as before. This performance is repeated on the other member standing opposite. After these ceremonies the actual chopping begins, and while the work is in progress all members are requested to pray.

If the tree falls in an easterly or westerly direction it is utilized. If it strikes the ground contrary to these directions it is abandoned and a new one is selected for the purpose. A tree never strikes the ground with terrific force because it is never chopped right off, but is allowed to fall gradually. While swaying in mid-air everybody present must shout continuously until it falls. It is

them trimmed, peeled, and hauled to camp at the head of a huge procession, where it is unloaded to await further ceremony.

THE SUN DANCE

The Sun Dance originated among my people long before the advent of the white race. It is an annual tribal sacrificial ceremony held in the summertime to propitiate the Sun and other puny spirits. The younger educated Indians of today, I suppose, have little faith in this dance, but our older tribesmen still adhere to the old traditions.

During the initial stages of celebrating a Sun Dance, a vow made to the Sun on behalf of a relative, stricken down with a severe illness, takes precedence over all other ceremonies.

A woman of chaste character will publicly voice her vow, when the need for such arises, in somewhat the following words:

> I will officiate and put up a Sun Dance lodge next summer as a request to the Divine Powers for a quick recovery from illness of my relatives.

After this avowal is annunciated through her tribe, she begins to accumulate buffalo tongues, the tongue of each animal killed being appropriated. These delicacies are cut into large slabs.

No woman of questionable character may assist in handling this meat, because it is to be taken as sacred food at a great public communion celebrated during the Sun Dance. All women assisting in handling these tongues are first required to openly declare themselves as having lived an upright and chaste life. If one is found to be of questionable character, she is immediately disqualified and is not even allowed to remain in the sacred lodge.

The period during the rites are performed in the Sun Dance woman's tepee, previously to any ceremonies in the main lodge, is approximately four days. The woman must abstain from food and water during this period of prayer. At intervals she is given water, colored with white clay, in an oyster shell, to moisten her tongue. If during this period the woman drinks any further water to quench her thirst, her action will bring on inclement weather during the remaining period of the Sun Dance.

On the fourth day the devotee changes her abode to a temporary canopy created in close proximity to the frame structure intended for the Sun Dance Lodge. Everybody in camp assembles nearby and sits down in a large circle. Numerous skin bags filled with buffalo tongue, already consecrated and cut into small pieces, are opened and put in a prominent place. At this point a number of women all of whom have dedicated themselves on a previous occasion for a similar purpose, will approach the bags of buffalo tongue, and each will pick up a piece of meat. Holding it in her hand she must openly declare herself, before the huge assembly, to be living a virtuous life, relating instances where temptations have been placed in her way by young tribesmen whom she will name in a loud voice. Needless to say, these ardent swains will be conspicuous by their absence during these avowals, and when they do appear, the other bucks will have a hearty laugh at their expense.

After this public avowal some of the men distribute these morsels of sacred tongue to every one present, including the children, and on receiving their portions each must pray before eating this hieratic food.

Now let us turn our attention to a couple of green hides placed inside the frame pole structure intended for a Sun Dance lodge. Two warriors will go and mingle with the great assembly and, at an opportune time, will seize two members thereof -- man, woman or child . The persons selected must accompany the warriors who lead them before a gathering of old men sitting beside the green hides, where incense is burning. These two persons are required to cut the green hides into strops, but before doing so they must purchase their privilege from the persons who performed a similar task at the previous Sun Dance. First, their faces are painted the same color as were the faces of the previous cutters. Then a warrior will relate his deeds of valor -- those accomplished with a knife being especially mentioned -- after which a sage will hand each candidate a knife, and grasping one by both arms, will go through with an affectation of cutting. Alternately the knife is held over the fumes of incense, and at the fourth move a split is made into the hide, when actual cutting begins.

Every strip is cut to a certain length. Each is placed on top of one cross pole of the framework of logs. Next, a large bundle of brush wood is tied securely at the forked end of the huge pole still lying on the ground.

A number of men and women are now standing in pairs in a row singing to the beating of tom toms, each couple holding up before it two long poles tied together, about four feet apart at the top. Similat singing groups of men and women converge from all directions on the framework of poles. The Sun Dance woman's husband squats on the brush tied on the pole, flapping his blanket and imitating

the noise of an eagle, by whistling through a bone. Then, amidst loud clamor and great applause the huge pole is gradually raised. When it is some feet off the ground the man on the brush jumps off. The long poles carried by the singing groups are now used to propel the big pole into place. When this task is accomplished, various Indians carrying articles of sacrifice and medicine pipes filled with tobacco, approach the Sun Dance couple and offer them a smoke. and any articles that they wish to sacrifice, at the same time requesting their prayers. The sacred couple pray and tie all offerings to the small end of every large pole. These long poles are then propelled into their places, their small ends converging at the forked end of the huge pole. Their larger ends are tied on the cross poles with the raw hide thongs. Now we have our framework complete. The couple officiating at the initial stage retire to their tepee. Their task is completed. The lodge is up and ready for use.

The next morning great excitement prevails in the huge encampment. Young boys riding bareback on their galloping ponies may be seen driving herds of horses into camp. Head dresses and buckskin suits of magnificent workmanship are hung out on tripods to air. Old warriors walking around the camp call loudly to every one to hurry. On this day one of the most spectacular sights of the Sun Dance takes place. Hundreds of Indians, in all their finery, parade to a nearby wood to bring back tree branches to be used as covering for their Sun Dance Lodge. Different societies and lodges, mounted and dressed in gorgeous attire, are represented in this body, while unattached Indians ride in small groups to join in this annual parade. When they have reached their objective, and all are supplied with

with foliage, a monster parade forms at the outskirts of the wood and starts on its return journey to camp, each rider dragging a limb of a tree on his rope. Amidst loud singing and shouting the spectacular parade wheels inside the encampment, some firing shots in the air as they enter. Sometimes two or three such trips are necessary before a sufficient supply of foliage is obtained to cover the huge frame work of poles in the centre of the encampment. After this is done, everything is ready for a day of ceremony and war dancing.

Different lodges and societies now take over the ceremonies. There were eight different Indian societies functioning at one of these Sun Dances when I was a boy. The great Secret Horn Society was the Senior lodge; next came the Eagle Society; third, Black Policemen; fourth, Doge; fifth, Flies; sixth, Crazy Dogs; seventh, Peigon Society; eighth, the only woman's lodge, which I will call the Buffaloes. Any two of these societies could officiate at a day's ceremonies. These rites consist chiefly of war dances.

The president of each society detailed to officiate at a day's ceremonies will select about six affluent members to participate with him. Members thus selected don their best beaded regalia and assemble in rows on the edges of the tepees, singing at intervals their society songs. Each man is armed with a rifle and is supplied with a belt of ammunition which he wears around his waist. The other society detailed for this prupose repeats this performance in another direction. These two small groups converge on the Sun Dance lodge at intervals, singing as they do so. On arrival there, each group enters and sits facing each other. Their relatives, staggering

under huge bundles of dry goods, also converge on the great lodge. These goods are to be given away as presents to visitors. Other women carrying refreshments, such as large pails of boiled meat, broth of varied ingredients, and hundreds of slabs of fried bread, also make their appearance.

When everybody is assembled in the lodge, the old warriors begin to sing and drum. Then the two groups of lodge members will jump to their feet and start a rhythmical movement, accompanied by yells and women's war chants. Several shots are also fired into the air by these participants. Women relatives -- mothers, wives, sisters -- rush up to dance beside a relative, making funny "La, La, La!" noise with their tongues. This is called "assisting". Before any person can assist a relative, he or she will have to pay by placing goods such as blankets, shawls, or anything else, on the ground beside the person to be assisted. These goods are collected into a heap, to be given to visiting tribesmen as presents. Sometimes horses are tendered as payments for assisting relatives. These horses are then led to the entrance of the lodge and taken away by their owners.
Another important figure in these ceremonies is a warrior dancing at an entrance of the Sun Dance lodge during the progress of the other dance. This is a selected place reserved for a lone enemy. Considerable payment is required of those who dance in this honored place. Horses and goods are lavishly given away by these dancing braves.

After this first dance, refreshments are served. At one Sun Dance I remember sitting down to receive my portion of refreshments. My mother had had the foresight to make me carry a large bowl.

A big six-foot brave with a pail crushed choked cheery broth, approached me first. I held out my bowl, he tipped his pail, emptied about half a pint of broth into it, and moved on. A few seconds later another fellow came along with a pail of rice. Some of this was spilled over my crushed choke cherry broth. The next gentleman had boiled beans, some of which he emptied into my already half filled bowl. The fourth individual doing "mess" duties had evaporated peaches in his pail, a portion of which was added to my mulligan. The last man filled my bowl to overflowing with an additional helping of dried apples. I placed this Chinese puzzle in front of me, trying to find the best way out of my dilemma. Having no spoon, I started picking out the evaporated peaches with my fingers. While thus engaged, two fellows placed a large pan filled with boiled meat in front of me. On receiving a chunk of meat on one corner of his blanket, each Indian would grunt like a hog rooting in the ground. When I received my chunk of meat on the end of my blanket, I grunted and decided to call it a day. My appetite unequal to the mixture in my bowl, I emptied it into a gopher gole on my way to father's tepee.

After refreshments dancing is again resumed. This time warriors relate tales of heroic achievements, accompanied by pantomimic display of skirmishes in which they participated in their youth. Scores of men take part in this sham fight, each participant making a considerable payment before being allowed to do so.

Other ceremonies, too numerous to mention, take place during this period of prayer and fun. Suffice it to say that we enjoy this annual celebration, with all its attendant festivities, and our

earnest prayer is that we may have health to enjoy other Sun Dances at future dates.

INDIAN CUSTOM -- Sun Dance

A good deal of nonsense has been written about the customs and habits of the aborigines. One ancient custom in particular, spoken of derisively as the "making of a brave" has been so misinterpreted and criticized that I feel it my duty to explain it more fully here.

In case of the severe illness of a close relative, an Indian will make a solemn vow, usually to the sun, in the following words: "I will sacrifice my body to you, to be lacerated, at the next sun dance ceremonies, trusting my relative will recover from his (or her) illness". A candidate for this pagan ceremony will then purchase the right to carry out his vow from another Indian who has previously been through this terrible ordeal. This done, he is free to present himself at the next annual sun dance to be pierced.

Minus his attire, excepting his breech cloth and moccassins, his body is first plastered with white clay. A coronet of sage bush adorns his head; he also wears bracelets and anklets of the same bush. Thus grotesquely attired, he paces up and down, like a caged animal, close to the centre pole of the sun dance lodge. He stretches his arms at intervals and sings in defiance of the torture soon to be undergone. At a given signal from attending braves, he lies down on his back and is asked the following questions by one of the sages in attendance:"Do you wish to be pierved deeply or slightly?" If he says "deeply" then he will be pierced lightly; if he says "slightly" then he must suffer a deep penetration.

After this formality, an arrowhead, sharpened and greased to a razor edge, is picked up by an old man, who holds the muscle of one side of the candidate's breast out taut and pushes the arrow through this muscle. Blood will start trickling down the sides of the candidate. A small stick, sharpened at one end, is thrust through the wound and left in with both ends showing. Similar operations are performed on the opposite side. Next, he will turn over, and another similar laceration is made on his right shoulder blade and a stick thrust through the wound. Two raw hide thongs, fastened securely at one end to the top of the centre pole, are then tied fast to both of the inserted sticks at his breast, after he regains his feet. A shield is also tied to the inserted stick at his right shoulder blade.

At this moment weird chanting and drumming begins, accompanied by loud applause from a number of old women. This is done to arouse excitement. The candidate then begins to dance with a backward pulling motion, keeping time with the drums, and at the same time pulling full weight on the thongs attached to the sticks inserted in his breast. At intervals while dancing, he will seize the shield fastened to his shoulder blade and do his utmost, tearing his flesh, to get it loose. If he is unable to releasr himself from the two thongs attached to his bosom, an incision is made into the muscle holding the sticks in place, and again he must dance, taking his weight, as before, on the raw hide thongs. If this fails to release him, then a spectator will grasp him from behind his shoulder and pull down on the thongs. The added weight will tear the flesh with a sickening sound, releasing both stick and sending both men to the ground. The flesh holding the stick and shield attached to his shoulder blade is ripped from him, if he fails to tear them loose after repeated

efforts. This is the pagan custom which historical writers describe as "the making of a Brave" and which they say all male Indians must submit to in order to be placed in the category of the Brave. But, as already stated, the only reason why an Indian subjects himself to this ordeal is to propitiate the Sun god for the recovery from illness of a very dear relative.

Eagle Ribs, a member of our tribe, later initiated as one of our councellors on the Blood reserve, subjected himself to this pagan ceremony three times in succession. A superstitious belief in dreams led Chief Eagle Ribs to undergo this marvellous feat of endurance. One night a person appeared to him in a dream saying: "Sacrifice yourself to be pierced three days in succession at this Sun Dance, of you would have your father recover." Accordingly, the next day, Eagle Ribs presented himself for this painful ordeal at the Sun Dance ceremonies, and thrice went through with this barbarous ritual.